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FM AMEMBASSY CAIRO  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 3254  
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FOR NEA/ELA AND DRL/NESCA

E.O. 12958: N/A  
TAGS: [PHUM](#) [KDEM](#) [ECON](#) [SOCI](#) [EG](#)  
SUBJECT: USG-FUNDED SMALL BUSINESS PROJECT FOR WOMEN IN THE  
DELTA

REF: A. CAIRO 1393  
[1](#)B. CAIRO 443

[1](#)1. KEY POINTS

-- (U) On July 20, we visited the USG-funded kiosk project, which aims to provide a small business livelihood for low-income women in a poor, agricultural section of the Nile Delta Governorate of Menufiya, approximately 75 miles north of Cairo.

-- (U) The USD 43,000 ESF grant funds the El Sadat Association for Social Development and Welfare to implement the project by constructing 20 kiosks for women who are their families' sole bread-winners. The women operate the kiosks to sell snacks and other items to generate income.

-- (U) We visited three kiosks in separate villages to evaluate the project and voice our support for the kiosk owners. The villagers and kiosk owners were warmly appreciative of the USG's efforts. The kiosks prominently displayed Embassy and El Sadat Association insignia.

[1](#)2. (SBU) Post's Institutions of Democracy Working Group provided a USD 43,000 grant out of Economic Support Funds to the El Sadat Association in June 2008 to implement the project, but the association was not able to begin its work until January 2009 because GOE security delayed approval. The grant funded the one-time provision of supplies and the construction of 20 kiosks for individual low-income women to operate as small businesses. The grant also funds an El Sadat Association documentary film to record the project's progress. The El Sadat Association has funded 64 other kiosks in Menufiya through grants from other sources. The El Sadat Association also conducts training workshops for the kiosk owners to teach them basic business skills, and marketing and sales techniques.

[1](#)3. (U) Menufiya Governorate is a low-income, agricultural area of the Nile Delta. The largest city in the area served by the El Sadat Association is Tala, population 500,000, which is the birthplace of former President Anwar El Sadat. President Mubarak was born in a nearby village. Unemployment in Menufiya is high, and contacts told us that approximately 10 young men from Tala recently drowned while trying to immigrate illegally to Italy to find work. While the area around Tala is surrounded by lush agricultural land, young men often refuse to work in the fields because of the negative social stigma associated with farming. According to contacts, young people with university degrees normally reject such work, and even the uneducated sometimes prefer to remain unemployed rather than working in agriculture. The villages we visited were marked by poverty. Few of the roads were paved, many of the children were barefoot, and unemployed young men loitered on street corners.

¶4. (U) During the day, we visited 3 kiosks and spoke with the kiosk owners and their village neighbors who attended the events. El Sadat Association Program Manager Donia El Sadat, a grand-niece of the late President Sadat, and her staff accompanied us. At the 3 sites, El Sadat addressed crowds of about 100 people, praising the kiosk owners for their work and introducing us. The El Sadat Association also arranged for a doctor to address the crowds about taking precautions to avoid contracting avian influenza. At all the sites, poloff addressed the villagers in Arabic over a public address system, expressing U.S. commitment to supporting economic development, congratulating the kiosk owners and thanking the villagers for their interest in the project. All 3 kiosks we saw were prominently emblazoned with the insignia of Embassy Cairo and the El Sadat Association.

¶5. (U) We visited the first kiosk in Tikh Daleka, a village with a population of about 30,000. Tikh Daleka houses a school that serves neighboring villages. Following our public comments to the villagers, we spoke briefly to the kiosk owner, an older woman who works to support her family by selling snacks from the kiosk; she expressed her appreciation to us. The crowd consisted of about 20 unemployed young men, and scores of women and children.

¶6. (U) We then visited the smaller village of Ezbaa El-Agra, population about 6,000, to view the second kiosk. We addressed the crowd in a dusty village square while ducks, chickens and geese walked amidst the villagers. The kiosk owner, a widow with two teenage children, thanked us publicly for the USG's grant, and proudly showed us her kiosk where she sells snacks and household items such as detergents. Our

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next stop was at the village of Saft Gedam, population approximately 20,000, where the kiosk owner had set up shop on the village's main road leading to the nearby city of Tanta. She was a young woman with two children under the age of three, whose husband is unemployed. In addition to the snacks and household goods we saw at the other kiosks, this woman also sold a range of daily newspapers. Both she and her husband thanked us publicly and privately for the grant.  
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